



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

**Office of the  
Assistant Secretary  
for Administration**

Office of  
Human Resources  
Management

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**TO:** Employees Serviced by Departmental Administration's  
Human Resources Services Division

**THROUGH:** Priscilla B. Carey /s/ Oct. 20, 2003  
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Administration

**FROM:** Sharon C. Black /s/ Oct. 20, 2003  
Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch  
Office of Human Resources Management

**SUBJECT:** Thrift Savings Plan – Second Open Season for 2003

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) open season, **October 15 - December 31, 2003**, is here. Did you know you can make contributions to TSP online through *Employee Express* at [www.employeeexpress.gov](http://www.employeeexpress.gov)?

**With *Employee Express* you can take charge. No need for forms! Simply follow these steps:**

- Locate the *Employee Express* Personal Identification Number (PIN) that was sent to you. If you've lost or forgotten your PIN, don't worry. Simply go to the *Employee Express* web site and click on "Lost or Forgot PIN." It takes about two weeks to receive your PIN in the mail at the address listed for your paycheck. Or call the *Employee Express* help desk at (478) 757-3030 and select the PIN option.
- Once you have your PIN, you can begin participating in TSP, change contribution amounts, or cancel your enrollment. It's that easy!

Changes are limited to one change per open season and elections made through *Employee Express* are effective the first full pay period in December 2003. **Employees covered under CSRS/CSRS-Offset can elect to contribute up to 9 percent, and FERS employees can elect to contribute up to 14 percent of their basic bi-weekly pay.** Contributions are subject to the Internal Revenue Service's annual dollar limits, set at \$12,000 for the 2003 tax year and \$13,000 for the 2004 tax year.

**What choice of investments do I have?**

- There are five investment funds: G (Government Securities Investment Fund); F (Fixed Income Index Investment Fund); C (Common Stock Index Investment Fund); S (Small Capitalization Stock Index Investment Fund); and I (International Stock Index Investment Fund).

**Who's eligible?**

- Current Federal employees in positions not excluded from paying into a retirement fund may elect to contribute or increase their contributions during open seasons. If you stop your TSP contributions during an open season, you must wait until the next open season to begin participating again. If contributions are stopped outside an open season, you must wait until the second open season after stopping to resume participation.
- Newly hired/rehired employees covered under FERS, CSRS, or CSRS-Offset can sign up to contribute to TSP within 60 days of hiring, without a waiting period. If the 60-day limit expires or open season closes, the employee must wait until the next open season to begin participating. Agency Automatic Contributions (1%) for newly hired FERS employees will begin the last month of the second open season after hiring.

**How do I make an open season election?**

- Use *Employee Express*. It's the easiest way to make an election.
- Or, you may submit a completed election form (TSP-1) to your Administrative Officer/Resource Manager or to the Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch (ELRBB) located in Room 27-W, Jamie L. Whitten Building. The TSP-1 is available on-line at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov) or through your Administrative Officer/Resource Manager.

**When do open season elections become effective?**

- Open season elections received before December 13, 2003 will be effective December 14, 2003. You should see the TSP contribution on your January 8, 2004 Leave and Earnings statement.
- Open season elections received after December 14, 2003 will be effective on the first day of the first full pay period after receipt.
- **Open season elections cannot be accepted after December 31, 2003.**

**How are my contributions allocated?**

- At any time (not just during open season), you may specify how your contributions are invested among the five funds. The contribution allocation you make will apply to all future contributions. It will not affect the money already in the TSP account.
- Interfund transfers may be used to redistribute money in existing accounts.
- You have three options to choose from in determining how you want your contributions distributed: 1) use the TSP website at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov); 2) call the ThriftLine at (504) 255-8777; or 3) submit form TSP-50 to the Thrift Board (TSP Service Office, National Finance Center, P.O. Box 60012, New Orleans, LA 70160).
- Please note: If your TSP account was first established after April 30, 2001, all contributions will be invested in the G Fund until you make a contribution allocation. If your TSP account was established before May 1, 2001, the TSP will use allocation information in the employee's TSP records.

**What about catch-up contributions?**

- *Employee Express* can help with that too!
- TSP “catch-up” contributions are permitted if you’re a TSP participant age 50 or older who contributes the maximum amount in regular contributions from basic pay. Contributions are made on pre-tax dollars through payroll deduction and are applied to your TSP account. You can sign up anytime but you must submit a new election for each calendar year, using the TSP-1-C form. The maximum contribution amount for 2004 is \$3,000.

**Where can I get more information about the TSP?**

- The booklet “A Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees,” dated May 2001, describes the TSP in detail and is available in the ELRBB.
- Additional information about the TSP, election forms, and the summary booklet are also available online and can be downloaded from the TSP website at: [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

If you have any questions, please contact Sharon Black on (202) 720-5576, or Bonnie Stewart on (202) 720-8244.

Attachments